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Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (U) This week's product is a joint effort of Embassy New Delhi and Consulate General Mumbai. Below is a compilation of political highlights for September 8-14, 2007 that did not feature in our other reporting, including:

- Senior Nuclear Scientist Speaks in Support of Nuclear Deal
- BJP Firebrand to Return to Party; BJP Preparing for National Elections in 2008
- Minister of State Briefed by Iranians in Tehran
- Trekking in Siachen Anyone? Welcome to Peace Mountain
- Bulgarian PM Expresses Support for Civil Nuclear Cooperation with India

Senior Nuclear Scientist Speaks in Support of Nuclear Deal

[1](#)2. (U) Dr. M.R. Srinivasan, the former Secretary of the Department of Atomic Energy and the founder of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India, spoke on "Reentering the International Nuclear Arena" on September 12 in Mumbai. After emphasizing India's achievements in building an independent indigenous nuclear program, Srinivasan acknowledged that international cooperation allowed this to take place in the first place. Srinivasan admitted that India's "limited" uranium reserves and "limited" access to imported technology inhibited the growth of the country's nuclear energy industry whose growth was necessary for India's long-term energy security. He noted that it would take another 20-30 years for India to develop fully the three-stage closed nuclear fuel cycle using the country's vast thorium reserves. Srinivasan was quick to point out that the Hyde Act drafted by the U.S. Congress was "only binding on America," and that the 123 Agreement, negotiated

by both countries, addressed all of India's concerns. Srinivasan stated that there would be no "adverse" impact on India's "strategic" (military) nuclear program, as the fuel supply for imported reactors is assured, India can reprocess spent fuel, and only IAEA safeguards will be implemented in the civil nuclear facilities.

¶3. (U) Srinivasan also maintained that India would not place any civilian nuclear reactor under safeguards until U.S. Congress and NSG approval was granted. Srinivasan admitted that the Indian government should have built a political consensus prior to negotiating the 123 Agreement, but said that the Left party's opposition to the agreement was largely "ideological." He asserted that India should not miss this opportunity to grow and expand both its nuclear and high-tech industries. The U.S. and India were two "estranged democracies," he concluded, but it was now time to "bury the nuclear hatchet." Fielding questions from the audience, Srinivasan stated that nuclear power was more economical than alternatives, such as coal power. He also proclaimed that too much human energy and talent are being wasted on nuclear weapons production and wanted to see universal nuclear disarmament.

¶4. (U) In his introduction to Srinivasan's speech, Dr. Homi Sethna, the "father" of the Indian atomic bomb, lauded his "optimistic" view of the successful completion of the U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement, and predicted that the agreement would not be finalized before April-May 2008. However, Sethna conceded that the "historic" agreement would improve bilateral relations between the U.S. and India.

BJP Firebrand to Return to Party; BJP Preparing for National Elections in 2008

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¶5. (C) Uma Bharati, a maverick Other Backward Caste (OBC) leader from Madhya Pradesh, is set to return to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). (Bharati is a known political firebrand who stormed out of the party in early 2006 to float her own outfit, after she was removed from the chief minister-ship of Madhya Pradesh.) A trusted BJP contact from Maharashtra told PolOff that in the recently concluded Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-BJP coordination meet in Bhayander near Mumbai, the RSS brokered a peace between Bharati and the BJP. The contact felt that Bharati is a mass leader from the second rung who can garner votes for the BJP in the December 2008 scheduled Madhya Pradesh state elections. He opined, "Only if Bharati returns can we retain power in Madhya Pradesh." He also said that his party is already in preparatory mode for the national elections, which he predicted would be in ¶2008. Stating that former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani would be their candidate for prime minister, the BJP would campaign on the issues of Muslim appeasement (UPA's implementation of the Sachar Committee report, which made a number of recommendations to address the relative inequality of Muslims) and the dredging of the "Ram Setu" bridge between India and Sri Lanka, which has emotional appeal for Hindus.

Minister of State Briefed by Iranians in Tehran

¶6. (C) Minister of State for External Affairs (MEA) E. Ahamed was in Tehran September 3-4 to attend the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministerial Meeting on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity, preceding Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Safari's New Delhi visit by three days (reftel a). On the sidelines of the meeting, the Iranians, including President Ahmadiyadeh and Foreign Minister Mottaki, briefed Ahamed on latest developments regarding the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran's nuclear program, according to MEA Under Secretary for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran Anil Kumar Sharma. Ahamed "did not learn anything very tangible" from the Iranians, but gave their standard line that "they want to engage in talks," Sharma told PolOff September 11.

Trekking in Siachen Anyone? Welcome to Peace Mountain

¶7. (U) For the first time since combat began in 1984, the Siachen glacier, recently dubbed "Peace Mountain" by PM Singh, is open to the public. According to the "Indian Express," "carefully vetted" trekking expeditions will now be allowed on the 72 km glacier to promote tourism in the region. The first expedition, which will reportedly consist of National Cadet Corps, Indian Military Academy cadets, and students from the Rashtriya Indian Military College, will embark from Leh September 19 for the Kumar Post at 16,000 feet. The Indian Army will provide basic training at the Siachen base camp for the expedition, which will be guided by ten "glacial craft experts," according to the press. The Indian Army, which is providing boarding, lodging, medical care and logistic support for the expedition, is expected to make such tours a regular event starting next year, on a limited basis, via its so-called "adventure wing." Comment: At this point, Siachen Glacier can not really be called "open for trekking," as the press has implied, considering that there is unexploded ordinance and the only trekkers taking part are related to the military. This is good PR for the Prime Minister, however, who wants to keep his agenda of peace with Pakistan moving forward. End comment.

Bulgarian PM Expresses Support for Civil Nuclear Cooperation with India

¶8. (U) Bulgarian Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev paid a state visit to India from 10-15 September 2007 and held official talks with Prime Minister Singh on bilateral, regional and global issues, including economic, defense, scientific and technological cooperation, cultural and

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educational exchange. New Delhi simultaneously hosted the Bulgaria-India business forum during the visit. Bulgaria expressed its support for Indian acceptance into the international arena of peaceful use of nuclear energy and stated its readiness to support efforts for civil nuclear cooperation with India. (NOTE: Thereby signifying a "yes" vote for India in the NSG. End note). Both Prime Ministers expressed support for UN Security Council reform to "enhance its transparency and effectiveness." Bulgaria reiterated its support for India's candidature for a permanent seat on an expanded UN Security Council, and both India and Bulgaria agreed to offer reciprocal support for their bids for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for 2011-12 and 2018-19 respectively.

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